

HYBRID VANE ISLAND DIFFUSER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to gas turbine engines and, more particularly, to a diffuser for directing a flow of compressed air with a radial component to a diffused annular flow having an axial component.

Description of the Prior Art

[0002] Conventional gas turbine engine diffusers comprise a machined ring which surrounds the periphery of a compressor impeller for capturing a radial flow of compressed air and redirecting it through generally tangential orifices into an array of diffuser pipes. Fabrication of the diffuser pipes is extremely complex since they have a flared internal pathway that curves from a generally radial tangential direction to an axial rearward direction. Each pipe must be manufactured to close tolerances individually and then assembled to the machined diffuser ring. Complex tooling and labor intensive manufacturing procedures result in a relatively high cost for the preparation of the diffusers.

[0003] In an attempt to reduce the tooling and the manufacturing costs, it has been proposed to manufacture a diffuser from two concentric nested shells see U.S. Patent No. 6,471,475, secured together by brazing, one of the shells being provided with grooves separated by seam edges while the other shell is provided with a smooth surface of revolution. The groove on the one shell are closed by the other shell when the shells are nested together and the seam edges are secured to the smooth surface thus defining individual ducts extending continuously from the compressor impeller to the outer shell edges.

[0004] Although the above-described diffuser design greatly reduces the tooling and manufacturing costs associated with prior art diffuser assemblies, the pursuit of increased efficiency at decreased cost makes improvement ever-desirable.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] It is therefore an aim of the present invention to simplify the fabrication of a gas turbine engine diffuser.

[0006] Therefore, in accordance with the present invention, there is provided a gas turbine engine diffuser comprising a bowl-shaped diffuser casing and a cover nested into the bowl-shaped diffuser casing and cooperating therewith in defining a diffuser passage having a channeled entry portion in fluid flow communication with a vaned exit portion via a vaneless intermediate portion, said channeled entry portion being divided into an array of inlet flowpaths by a first set of vanes, and wherein said vaned exit portion is divided into an array of outlet flowpaths by a second set of vanes.

[0007] In accordance with a further general aspect of the present invention, there is provided a diffuser for directing a flow of compressed air with a radial component to a diffused annular flow having an axial component, the diffuser comprising a diffuser casing including: a generally radially extending surface having a first array of vanes integrally formed on a rearwardly facing side thereof, and a generally axially extending annulus projecting rearwardly from a periphery of said radially extending surface, said annulus being provided with a second array of vanes defining a plurality of exit air passages through said annulus; and a cover adapted to cooperate with said first array of vanes when secured to said diffuser casing in order to define therewith a plurality of entry air passages in communication with said exit air passages.

[0008] In accordance with a further general aspect of the present invention, there is provided a diffuser comprising an integrated opened island diffuser casing having a plurality of island vanes, the opened island diffuser casing being closed by a cover, the island vanes and the cover cooperating to define a plurality of D-shaped entry passages leading to a vaneless annular bend, the vaneless annular bend opening to an annular array of exit passages defined by a set of deswirl vanes.

[0009] In accordance with a further general aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of making a diffuser for directing a flow of compressed air with a radial component to a diffused annular flow having an axial component, the

method comprising the steps of: providing a bowl-shaped casing having an annular disc surface provided with a circumferential array of island vanes, and an annulus projecting axially from a periphery of the disc surface, said annulus defining a circumferential array of axially extending exit passages, and securely nesting a cover in said bowl-shaped casing to cooperate with said island vanes to form a circumferential array of generally radially oriented inlet passages in fluid flow communication with said axially extending exit passages.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[00010] Having thus generally described the nature of the invention, reference will now be made to the accompanying drawings, showing by way of illustration a preferred embodiment thereof, and in which:

[00011] Fig. 1 is a side view, partly broken away, of a gas turbine engine to which an embodiment of the present invention is applied;

[00012] Fig. 2 is a perspective view, partly broken away, of a portion of a diffuser assembly according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[00013] Fig. 3 is a partial radial sectional view of the diffuser assembly shown in Fig. 2; and

[00014] Fig. 4 is a schematic view of a cross-section of one air entry passage of the diffuser assembly.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[00015] Fig.1 illustrates a subsonic gas turbine engine 10 generally comprising in serial flow communication a fan 12 through which ambient air is propelled, a multistage compressor 14 for pressurizing the air, a combustor 16 in which the compressed air is mixed with fuel and ignited for generating an annular stream of hot combustion gases, and a turbine 18 for extracting energy from the combustion gases.

[00016] The last stage of the illustrated compressor 14 comprises a high-pressure centrifugal impeller 19. The centrifugal impeller 19 directs the compressed air radially outwardly into a diffuser 20. The diffuser 20 redirects the compressed air from a radial direction to a diffused annular axial rearward flow into the combustor 16.

[00017] As shown in Fig. 2, the diffuser 20 according to the present invention is preferably of a two-piece construction and generally comprises an integrated opened island diffuser casing 22 and a separate annular cover 24. The casing 22 is bowl-shaped and the cover 24 is concentrically nested in the bowl-shaped diffuser casing 22 and secured thereto.

[00018] As will be seen hereinafter, the diffuser casing 22 can be provided in the form of a one-piece casting or, alternatively, designed as an assembly of machined pieces and sheet metal pieces.

[00019] Indeed, the diffuser casing 22 can be provided in the form of a one-piece casting comprising an open-vaned disc 26 having an inner rim 28 circumscribing a central impeller opening. A circumferential array of island vanes 29 (i.e. wide vanes) is integrally formed on an inner surface of the disc 26. The island vanes 29 extend between the inner rim 28 and the periphery of the disc 26 to define a series of radial diffuser grooves 31 having cross-sectional areas of increasing magnitude in a direction away from the inner rim 28. The outer periphery of the open vaned disc 26 merges into an arcuate vaneless annular wall portion 30 defining a 90 degrees bend from radial to axial (see Fig. 3). The annular arcuate wall portion 30 merges into an axially extending annular outer wall portion 32 which cooperates with a concentric axially extending annular inner wall portion 34 to bound a series of deswirl vanes 36 integrally cast therebetween.

[00020] To ensure accurate throat and a consistent leading edge shape, the island vanes 29 or at least the entrance surfaces thereof are preferably machined to appropriate finished surface tolerances before the cover 24 be attached thereto. The other cast part of the diffuser casing 22 do not generally requires machining as they have a less critical impact on the flow of compressed air.

[00021] Instead of being made from a one-piece casting, the diffuser casing 22 could be designed as an assembly in which the vaned disc 26, the arcuate wall 30, the straight outer annular wall portion 32, the inner annular wall portion 34 and the deswirl vanes 36 are separate pieces adapted to be assembled together in a diffuser casing configuration. The vaned disc 26 could be machined in a solid block of material, whereas the arcuate annular wall 30, the annular outer wall portion 32, the

annular inner wall portion 34 and the deswirl vanes 36 could be made from sheet metal. These various pieces could be assembled together as by welding. Such an assembly is advantageous in that it allows reducing the weight of the diffuser by using sheet metal against casting.

[00022] The cover 24 has a smooth surface of revolution 38 adapted to be uniformly seated against the free distal end surface 40 of the island vanes 29 in order to close the entry grooves 31 and, thus, form a circumferential array of radial entry passages. For simplicity, the cover 24 may be a sheet metal part, joined mechanically on the diffuser casing 22 e.g. brazed, welded, bolted, etc. For the brazed version, to ensure a good contact during brazing, the cover 24 may be press-fit mounted. Equidistant slots 42 may be cut in the opposite region of each island vane 29, which may be filled with the brazing paste during the brazing process. In the illustrated embodiment, the cover 24 is a simple body of revolution, which is advantageously easy to make. The cover 24 is provided with a peripheral annular ridge 44 for sealing engagement with the inner annular wall portion 34 of the diffuser casing 22.

[00023] As shown in Fig. 3, the cover 24 cooperates with the arcuate annular wall portion 30 to define a vaneless intermediate annular passage for receiving the compressed air from the radial air passages defined by the island vanes 29 and the cover 24. The compressed air then passes through a circumferential array of axially extending exit air passages defined by the deswirl vanes 36 and the concentric inner and outer annular wall portions 32 and 34.

[00024] As shown in Fig. 2, the cross-section of the grooves 31 on the disc portion has a "D" shape to facilitate casting or machining. Each groove 31 has a cross-section of variable area by variation of the width and of the height as well. As shown in Fig. 4, the sidewalls 33 of each groove 31 are inclined outwardly at an angle α from the vertical. The angle α is preferably about 10 degrees. The sidewalls 33 should not be perpendicular to the bottom 35 of the groove 31 and the cover 24 (i.e. $\alpha > 0^\circ$). Furthermore, sharp corners at the junction of the sidewalls 33 and the bottom 35 of each groove 31 should also be avoided. A curvature of radius R is preferably provided at the junction of the sidewalls 33 and the bottom wall 35 of each groove 31

in order to provide for a smooth transition between the sidewalls 33 and the bottom wall 35 of the groove 31.

[00025] The internal vaneless space geometry, which is formed by the repeated intersection of the "D" shaped passages, is chosen because of the advantageous match between the air angle distribution exiting the impeller 19 and the metal angles formed by the leading edges. The D-shaped cross-section has been found to provide unique aerodynamic benefits.

[00026] In order to further increase the aerodynamic efficiency, the axial deswirl vanes 36 may be bowed and provided with different leading edge profile such as, straight having an angle different of 90 degrees with the airflow direction, convex, concave, "S", reverse "S", etc.

[00027] The present design advantageously provides for easy fabrication as well as a simpler manner of obtaining a diffuser having a hybrid combination of inlet island vanes and outlet deswirl vanes. In contrast to known island vane diffusers in which the vanes have to be sealed to a surrounding turbine structure, the island vanes 29 and the deswirl vanes 36 are integrated to a bowl-shaped diffuser casing and the grooves between the island vanes 29 are closed by nesting a simple dedicated cover in the bowl-shaped diffuser casing. Also the axially extending exit passages formed between the deswirl vanes 36 are radially bounded on opposed sides thereof by a pair of concentric inner and outer annular walls which forms part of the diffuser casing, thereby obviating the need for sealing the deswirl vane to a surrounding turbine casing structure of the gas turbine engine.

[00028] It is noted that the integrated opened island diffuser casing 22 may be a module of the gas generator case, integrated into it.

[00029] The present diffuser, therefore, is just two parts which are easy to make, especially since no manual work for the casting version (i.e. no welding and no adjustment). The invention also eliminates expensive tooling and leads to good process control, little manual work and a compact structure which reduces vibrations and improves life.

[00030] Modifications and improvements to the above-described embodiment of the present invention may become apparent to those skilled in the art. The foregoing description is intended to be exemplary rather than limiting. The scope of the invention is therefore intended to be limited solely by the scope of the appended claims.